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## Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Holy God, as we labor today, may our praise rise to You. All Your works praise Your Name on the Earth, in the sky, and on the sea.

Lead our Senators along the paths of Your will. Stir Your cleansing and edifying spirit among them as You clarify and strengthen their thoughts and actions. Lord, empower our lawmakers to work diligently for the freedom and justice of all people. Help them to see and know purposes beyond partisan interest, as they remember that they are first and foremost citizens of Your kingdom. Remind them that You guide the humble and teach them Your way.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, October 29, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,  
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

### SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, there will be a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The Republicans will control the first hour and the majority will control the next hour.

I anticipate that the Senate will adopt the motion to proceed to H.R. 3548, the Unemployment Benefits Extension Act of 2009. We also expect to receive the conference report to accompany Interior appropriations. I have spoken to the Speaker and the majority leader of the House, and they expect to have that to us early this afternoon. The conference report contains a continuing resolution that funds the government through December 18. We hope to reach a short time agreement to consider that conference report today. If we are not able to do that, we are going to have to have some votes tomorrow and it could spill over into Saturday if we can't work anything out. We have to get the unemployment done. We have millions of people who are waiting for that money.

### MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1963 AND H.R. 3617

Mr. REID. Madam President, I understand there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bills by title for a second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1963) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide assistance to caregivers of veterans, to improve the provision of health care veterans, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 3617) to provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a multiyear law reauthorizing such programs.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to these matters en bloc.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bills will be placed on the calendar.

### NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Madam President, last week four Nevadans tragically died from the H1N1 virus, the swine flu. In Clark County, NV, the State's most populous county and the home of Las Vegas, 18 people have now died as a result of the H1N1 flu. We are all familiar with this strain of the flu. It has been on the front pages for months.

This past weekend, President Obama declared the outbreak a national emergency in anticipation of a rush of patients to doctors' offices and emergency rooms.

Fortunately, for nearly 150 years the United States has had a high-ranking official in place to serve as the government's top public health officer. We call that person the Surgeon General of the United States. Unfortunately, though, right now we have no permanent Surgeon General. The reason is as simple as it is mind-boggling: Republicans in the Senate refuse to confirm President Obama's exceptionally qualified nominee for this job. I would try to explain the Republican reason for the refusal, but, as with so many other

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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